

private religious expression in schools and the prohibitions against coerced student participation in religious expression. These guidelines were the culmination of my Administration's 4-year effort to forge consensus on the role of religion in the schools.

Likewise, business institutions have proven themselves to be valuable partners in helping schools and school districts better prepare students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to be part of the 21st century workforce. Over the last 2 decades, businesses have played a leadership role at the local, State, and national levels in supporting the need for school reform and advancing the standards-based movement. Although school-business partnership can be little more than a donation, there are many examples across the country of businesses that are working actively with schools to help improve the quality of public education. In these partnerships, businesses are working to help bolster school curricula, train teachers, implement technology effectively, offer mentors and tutors to students, and provide lessons in management and leadership. If this Nation's public schools are to offer the kind of high-quality education that prepares students for the world of work and active citizenship, then businesses must play a key role in this process.

Businesses have much to offer the charter movement. Because charter schools are exempt from many regulations governing traditional public schools, they have more freedom to develop innovative educational programs and to partner with business institutions in creative ways. Currently, there are over 100 employer-linked charter schools in operation across the country. These schools vary from those offering very focused career preparation, to those that incorporate modest exposure to jobs, careers, and employers. What they share in common are innovative environments that offer work-based and career-focused educational experiences for students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

But I believe that businesses can do more to work with charter schools to develop stimulating educational environments that prepare our students for the challenges of the workforce in the 21st century. I especially believe that employer-linked charter schools

offer a new range of possibilities for those students who are not finding success in our more traditional public schools.

Accordingly, because there is still a great deal of confusion about how different entities can be involved in the charter movement, I direct you to work together with the Department of Justice to develop guidelines to be released prior to the 2000–2001 school year to help faith-based and other community-based and business institutions understand the role they can play in the charter school movement. Public charter schools must be nonsectarian and nondiscriminatory in their admissions and practices. In addition, as with other public schools, a charter school should not offer opportunities for the commercial exploitation of its students and/or its mission. However, there are numerous ways that faith-based groups and employers can play a positive role in creating and supporting public charter schools, just as other community organizations do. These guidelines would augment the existing guidelines for public charter schools and the guidelines for religious expression in public schools that I released in December.

Increasing the quality of education in this country for disadvantaged students is a national priority but requires the active involvement of every affected community. In economically distressed communities, faith-based organizations and business partners can play critically important roles in providing needed support services and job-focused experiences for students who too often lack either. Ensuring that faith-based and business institutions can play a vigorous role in expanding educational opportunities while respecting the separation of church and state and the limitations on commercial involvement in schools is an important step to providing high-quality educational experiences for all children.

William J. Clinton

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of Japan

May 5, 2000

The President. Good morning.

Visit of Prime Minister Mori

Q. What are you going to talk about?

The President. Well, we're going to talk about our relationship, which is very, very important to both of us. I'm delighted to have Prime Minister Mori here and anxious to have this chance to visit, and I'm also very much looking forward to going to Okinawa to the G-8 meeting this year. So we have a lot to visit about.

Q. Is this your first meeting?

The President. Yes. It's our first official meeting, yes. We met briefly once before.

Q. Mr. President, do you intend to talk about trade and especially the telecommunication dispute?

The President. We're going to talk about everything, I hope—everything we have time to talk about.

Japanese Economy

Q. What's your view of the Japanese economy?

The President. I think it's getting better, and we're going to talk about what the future is. We support a strong Japanese economy. I think there are a lot of inherent strengths in the economy, most of all in the people and the level of skill and education and capacity to grow. I believe that they will return to big growth, I hope sooner rather than later.

Q. Mr. President, what's your message to the people of Okinawa?

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, the American economy, is it overheating?

The President. Well, the inflation report yesterday was quite good. And as you know, this morning the unemployment report is wonderful news for the American people, the lowest in over 30 years now. So I'm hopeful, because combined with yesterday's inflation report, the news is good, and we just have to keep on a steady course, keep working.

Okinawa

Q. Mr. President, what's your message to the people of Okinawa when you go there in July? Are you willing to talk with them and explain to them why we need to maintain all those U.S. bases in Okinawa?

The President. I hope I'll have a chance to speak with them, and I want to talk to the Prime Minister about how we should do that. But we tried to be sensitive to the concerns of the people and to be highly respectful. And where mistakes have been made, we've tried to correct them, and we will continue to do that.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:57 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

**Remarks on Departure for
Farmington, Pennsylvania and an
Exchange With Reporters**

May 5, 2000

Employment Report

The President. Good afternoon. In a few moments I will depart for a meeting with the Senate Democrats in Pennsylvania, where we will discuss ways to keep our economy strong and our Nation moving in the right direction.

Before I leave, I'd like to share the latest good news about our economy. This morning, we received the news that we have achieved 3.9 percent unemployment. That is the lowest peacetime unemployment since 1957. That was the year the Dodgers last played ball in Brooklyn.

Most Americans have never lived in a peacetime economy with unemployment as low as it is today. Indeed, its lowest rate overall in over 30 years. Over the last 7 years, our Nation has created 21 million new jobs, cut the unemployment rate almost in half.

I just want to make the point again that this is clear evidence that our economic strategy works, fiscal discipline, more investment in education, technology and training, the expansion of markets for American products and services. It's given us the lowest unemployment rate for African-Americans and Hispanic ever recorded, the lowest unemployment rate for women in more than 40 years, strong wage growth among all income groups.

The American people deserve the lion's share of the credit for this historic achievement. But we have a responsibility to stay